



The seventh servant: The implications of a truth drive in Bion's theory of 'O'



James S. Grotstein©

Drawing upon Bion's published works on the subjects of truth, dreaming, alpha-function and transformations in 'O', the author independently postulates that there exists a 'truth instinctual drive' that subserves a truth principle, the latter of which is associated with the reality principle. Further, he suggests, following Bion's postulation, that 'alpha-function' and dreaming/phantasying constitute unconscious thinking processes and that they mediate the activity of this 'truth drive' (quest, pulsion), which the author hypothesizes constitutes another aspect of a larger entity that also includes the epistemophilic component drive. It purportedly seeks and transmits as well as includes what Bion (1965, pp. 147-9) calls 'O', the 'Absolute Truth, Ultimate Reality, O' (also associated with infinity, noumena or things-in-themselves, and 'godhead') (1970, p. 26). It is further hypothesized that the truth drive functions in collaboration with an 'unconscious consciousness' that is associated with the faculty of 'attention', which is also known as 'intuition'. It is responsive to internal psychical reality and constitutes Bion's 'seventh servant'. O, the ultimate landscape of psychoanalysis, has many dimensions, but the one that seems to interest Bion is that of the emotional experience of the analysand's and the analyst's 'evolving O' respectively (1970, p. 52) during the analytic session. The author thus hypothesizes that a sense of truth presents itself to the subject as a quest for truth which has the quality and force of an instinctual drive and constitutes the counterpart to the epistemophilic drive. This 'truth quest' or 'drive' is hypothesized to be the source of the generation of the emotional truth of one's ongoing experiences, both conscious and unconscious. It is proposed that emotions are beacons of truth in regard to the acceptance of reality. The concepts of an emotional truth drive and a truth principle would help us understand why analysands are able to accept analysts' interpretations that favor the operation of the reality principle over the pleasure principle—because of what is postulated as their overriding adaptive need for truth. Ultimately, it would seem that Bion's legacy of truth aims at integrating finite man with infinite man.

So much the rather Celestial light
Shine inward, and the mind through all her powers
Irradiate, there plant eyes, all mist from thence
Purge and disperse, that I may see and tell
Of things invisible to mortal sight
(Milton, 1674, *Paradise lost*, p. 101).

Psycho-analytic procedure presupposes that the welfare of the patient demands a *constant supply of truth* as inevitably as his physical survival demands food. It further presupposes that *discovery of the truth* about himself is a precondition of *an ability to learn the truth*, or at least to seek it in his relationship with himself and others. It is supposed at first that *he cannot discover the truth* about himself without assistance from the analyst and others (Bion, 1992, p. 99, my italics).

I think it is 'better' to know the truth about one's self and the universe in which I exist. But I do not wish to imply that it is 'nicer', or 'pleasanter'. Whether it is 'better' is a matter of opinion which each individual has to arrive at for himself: his opinion and only his.

The Seven Pillars of Wisdom are:

I keep six honest serving men
They taught me all I knew;
Their names are What and Why and When
And How and Where and Who.
I send them over land and sea,
I send them east and west;
But after they have worked for me,
I give them all a rest.

The missing one completes the seven (Bion, 1977, *Seven servants*, Introduction, from Rudyard Kipling's *Just so stories*).

Introduction

In this contribution I seek to link Bion's mysterious 'seventh servant' with a 'truth principle' to stand alongside the reality and pleasure principles, and to postulate a 'truth drive', by which I mean a drive in which one seeks 'emotional truth' that accompanies, but is distinct from, the epistemophilic component drive, which seeks knowledge about reality. I mean '*instinctual drive*' as 'a motivational force that always results in a specific pattern of behavior' (Moore and Fine, 1990, p. 101) and '*drive*' in the sense 'of a motivational force [that] may operate without relation to a particular mode of expression' (p. 101). It is my conjecture that the concept of a truth drive (quest, pulsion) may serve as an organizing principle through a major portion of Bion's episteme. I became aware of this idea when I read the following passage:

Like one that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread;
And having once turned round walks on,
And turns no more his head;
Because he knows a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread

The 'frightful fiend represents indifferently the *quest for truth* or the active defences against it' (1970, p. 46, my italics).

I interpret Bion's use of this passage from Coleridge's *The rhyme of the ancient mariner* as supportive of the notion of a truth drive as a relentless, hounding '*quest for truth*'. He states further,

Assuming that there is some standard by which one could distinguish what is true and what is not, namely, that there is some sort of *truth function*, it is difficult to believe that I, as the object of investigation, am likely to give you a correct (truthful) answer as to what it is that I am or contain (1973, p. 59, my italics).

I associate his 'truth function' with the idea of a 'truth principle', one that is on par with the reality and pleasure principles but more closely associated with the former. It is my impression that the first six servants implicate the epistemophilic actions¹ of the sense organs of consciousness that are receptive to 'psychical qualities' (Freud, 1900, p. 615), that is, sense-data for external reality; whereas the '*seventh servant*' implicates emotions and intuition garnered by reverie (either within the self or in mother or analyst), which are elaborated by another aspect of the epistemophilic component drive, the 'searchlight' of a different 'consciousness' (attention intuition), one both within and of the unconscious, one directed inward ('Celestial light ... shine inward') into the internal world to be conscious ('of things invisible to mortal sight').² Bion, citing Freud (1911), states:

A special function was instituted which had periodically to search the other world in order that its data might be already familiar if an urgent inner need should arise; this function is *attention*. Its activity meets the sense impressions half-way instead of awaiting their appearance (1962, p. 5).

Bion continues: 'Freud did not carry his investigations of attention far, but the term, as he uses it, has a meaning I would investigate as a factor in alpha-function' (p. 5). Implicit in my conception of a truth drive is Bion's notion that alpha-function (p. 25) and dreaming (p. 8) constitute unconscious thinking, that is, mediation of evolving *O* (1970, p. 52, 1992, pp. 37, 39, 42-54, 64, 133, 184), not of comprehending *O* (*O* is incomprehensible, ineffable) but by the subject's (in analysis, the analyst and then the analysand) 'becoming *O*' the unknown and unknowable. Thus, alpha-function and dreaming become truth's envoy.

Caveat

In the following presentation I scrupulously attempt to present Bion's ideas as faithfully as possible and to delineate my own formulations and/or reformulations of his ideas but with my stamp on them. His writings are powerful, dense and laden with incredible wisdom, but his style appears elusive, recondite, overcondensed and open-ended, all too often leaving the reader inescapably at the mercy of imaginative conjecture. It is as if he offers us the bare essential pieces of a puzzle that we are to fill in, only for us to find that the puzzle resembles Borges's (1998) ever-expanding, infinite 'Book of sand' or 'Library of Babel'. His postulation of *O* suggests to some psychoanalysts a controversial religious-mystical turn in his later development, but Bion himself was not religious. One can determine this for oneself by reading Bion's *Cogitations*, where he refers to 'religion as an illusion' (1992, pp. 374, 379). He also

¹ I am indebted to Paulo Sandler for this connection (personal communication, 1 February 2004).

² Bion (1962, p. 22), differing from Freud, seems to posit two aspects of consciousness to the unconscious, one as a vision-analogized function and the other as shared 'binocular' function with the other consciousness (that of psychical qualities) (López-Corvo, 2003, p. 46).

stated, 'My knowledge of mysticism is through hearsay and I am, therefore, not qualified to express an opinion which may have greater weight attached to it than it deserves' (1974, p. 105). His 'mystical science' ideas prefigured current trends in science generally, particularly with relativity, uncertainty, complexity and emergence theories. Ultimately, Bion's *O* is about the emotional truth of the psychoanalytic session in both the analysand and analyst.

His use of religion was an attempt to use it metaphorically as a psychoanalytic 'vertex' or point of view, namely, as a psychoanalytic instrument. For example, from Meister Eckhart he borrowed 'godhead', which suggests a hypothetical cosmic intelligence that is cognizant of all things. To me it corresponds to 'Laplace's demon': 'an intelligence that at a given instant knew all forces acting in nature and the position of all particles and that was capable of subjecting all these data to mathematical analysis' (M. Schermer, 2003). The question of a relationship between his ideas and Eastern thought has been postulated by many but is outside the domain of this contribution.

I believe that Bion became aware that psychoanalytic ideas had become a prisoner to the domain of the senses and its sense (image)-derived language—the 'language of substitution' (Bion, 1970, p. 126). The latter constituted a domain that had accommodated linear science, whose proper object, Bion felt, was inanimate objects but which was blind to human experience and to the existence of an ultra-sensual world beyond the third dimension—until the arrival of the theories of relativity and uncertainty (pp. 6-25). Animate objects (humans) defied the confines of linear science, he believed (1963, p. 11). He thus set out to formulate the 'Language of Achievement' (1970, p. 126), a language that derived from intuitive explorations of the ultra-sensual internal and external worlds in terms of *emergent emotions*, and is responsive to such ideas as 'transcience' (Kitayama, 1998) and 'uncertainty' (Heisenberg, 1958). His mission was to shift psychoanalysis from inanimate to animate science and to pull it from deterministic certainty to relativistic uncertainty, which, since Einstein and Heisenberg, is closer to our current concepts of cosmic and human truth.

Bion's ontological epistemology

In my understanding of his work, Bion distinguishes between two epistemological techniques: a) Cartesian, by which is meant that a separation exists between subject and object as well as between the mind and thoughts (emotions) that await a mind to think (contain) them; and b) 'become', in which the subject 'becomes' the object (not fusion because the subject remains separate), an idea which I believe he derived from Plato (1892, Vol. II, p. 155) in which the percipient, in order to perceive the percept, must 'become' it. Put another way, we become what—and whom—we experience, much as we physically become what we eat—following many intermediary transformations of the original elements of experience. It is my impression that the analyst, rather than being distant or neutral, *must become the analysand's unacceptable (as yet) emotional truth about his/her ultimate reality* (the symptom of the moment) by unconsciously resonating with the analysand's anxiety from within his/her own unconscious and then transcending it.

From the analytic standpoint this would mean that the analyst must relinquish or suspend his/her Cartesian mode of 'understanding' the analysand in favor of 'becoming' them, a component of the act of containment. Although Bion is less than explicit about how the technique of becoming is to be achieved, except for his exhortation to abandon memory and desire (as well as understanding and preconceptions) (1970, p. 46), it would appear that the analyst's own alpha-function, which summons those emotions and experiences native to him/her that symmetrically correspond to the as yet unmentalized emotional experiences within the analysand, is resonantly evoked within him/her independently. That is how I interpret Bion's theory of the analyst's role in processing the analysand's hidden emotional truths (1965, p. 51). I alluded to 'become' not being fusion, in the sense of losing ego boundaries, even transiently. It is my understanding that in the 'become' process the analyst is evoked, provoked or 'primed' (Helm, unpublished) to respond to the analysand's emotions and associations with his/her own private, native emotions that are independently summoned within him/her—that the analyst's alpha-function, working in a state of reverie, allows the analyst to enter within his/her own unconscious to locate and to summon (unconsciously) those emotions and experiences that are apposite to the hidden emotional truths of the analysand with which they symmetrically resonate, thereby achieving a 'common sense' (Bion, 1963, p. 10) corroboration of the analysand's emotions, and furthermore establishing the 'clinical truth' of the moment. I shall present a briefcase illustration to demonstrate this idea.

Brief case illustration

A 24-year-old recently married woman, who had just emigrated from a central European country, had begun psychoanalysis with me about four months prior to the episode I am about to report. I assessed her to be high-functioning but suffering from a long-standing deep depression. The analysis initially proceeded quite well and she dreamed profusely. Suddenly, one day she entered my consulting room appearing strange, almost as if she were sleepwalking or in a trance. She walked toward the couch, lay on it for a second or two, then sat up and relocated herself in a chair facing me. Her demeanor was ominous, mysterious, eerie, uncanny. While all this was in progress, I found myself becoming more and more uncomfortable—to the point that I became anxious—although I did not know about what. Then I found myself becoming terrified! The analysand was quiet in the meanwhile. Actually, she had been silent for about 20 minutes, which seemed like a lifetime to me then. I then began to feel that I was dying! I knew that I wasn't, but I really felt that I was. When the feeling became almost unbearable, she broke the silence and uttered, 'You're dead!'

What emerged was a significant part of her past history and the emotional truths she had been evading. Her parents divorced when she was 3 years old. As was the custom in that country at the time, the father, being a male, automatically claimed custody of his daughter (their only child). He took her far away from her mother to his own parents, who lived in the Alps. Her grandparents thereafter became her functioning parents—until age 7 when her father came to relocate her in her native

city so that she could attend school. When the analysand told me that I was dead, she then related this story: she recalled the railway train, the station platform, and both her and her grandparents tearfully waving goodbye. She never saw them again. She claimed that they both died soon after of broken hearts. The date of this analytic session was an anniversary of that fateful train departure.

Now that the analysand had broken the silence, I recovered my composure and began sorting out all that I had heard and experienced. I at first thought that she had projected into me her experience of her grandparents' deaths and that I had 'become' her repressed experiences. I had intended to interpret that, but instead I unexpectedly heard myself saying, 'I believe that, when you waved goodbye to your beloved grandparents on that fateful day, you "died" as a self and have remained emotionally dead up until this time. The anniversary of its happening seems to have brought the event back to life for you. You gave to me your intolerable feelings of your emotional death and the loss of your grandparents because you could not bear to experience the truth about your separating from them, but now hoped that I could bear it *for* you and ultimately *with* you'. She then exclaimed, 'Yes! Yes! Yes!' and cried. This session became a turning point in her treatment.

In brief, a powerful emotional event took place between us in which I became both dreamy (in a spontaneous state of reverie) and 'dreamed' (Bion, 1992, pp. 120, 215) what the analysand could not yet process ('dream'). I had 'become' her inner, thwarted truth that she could not bear.

The patient had not been able to tolerate or encompass the emotional truth of her original childhood experiences, *O* (her Absolute *impersonal* Truth and the truth drive that sought to irrupt into her consciousness), of the Absolute Truth of the realization of her parents' divorce when she was 3, the earlier separation from her mother at 3 and subsequent separation from her grandparents when she was 7, their deaths soon afterwards, and the 'psychical truth' that she had been the cause of all the above in unconscious phantasy. Thus, in addition to projecting her traumatic realities into me as well as her endeavored self, she also projected the awareness of her phantasied deadly toxicity.

These experiences persisted as unprocessed beta-elements in the form of her lifelong depression but, under the impact of analytic regression, surfaced as an acute symptomatic depression, which she projected into me in many layers. My difficulty in processing the experience constituted my *O*, but I was able, with the patient's help, to effect a transformation of *my* experience of *O* (as beta-elements) through the use of *my* alpha-function to see how it symmetrized with that which the patient experienced but could not process. Her depression constituted a lifelong *unprocessed truth* that she could not face. In this session her truth drive was freed up to express the hitherto unthinkable. In that analytic moment the two of us *could* at last face *O* and allow it to become owned by her as her own personal truth.

A synopsis of Bion's theory of transformations

I alluded to Bion's ontological epistemology. By that I mean his idea that transformations of emotions is a principal goal of epistemology for psychoanalysis,

a concept that approaches the perspective of Heidegger (1927) and his concepts of 'Dasein' (being here) and 'aletheia' (unconcealment). The following is a brief synopsis of how I understand Bion's theory of transformations in regard to ontological epistemology (Williams, unpublished), namely, the *transformation of Absolute Truth to tolerable emotional truth*.

The analysand (like the infant) experiences *O* as beta-elements (sense impressions of emotional experience) (Bion, 1962, p. 5). The analysand has the choice either of *evasion* of the awareness of the painful emotional experience, or of choosing to accept its truth by being willing to suffer it (p. 48) because, I suggest, of his/her adherence to the truth drive. In the former case the intolerable beta-elements are projected either into the soma or into images of internal or external objects, creating persecutory anxiety in either case, as well as a denudation of the ego as a result of the projections. In the latter case the analysand, I believe, accepts the experience of suffering the *truth* of the emotional pain and mentally evolves in so doing—and is thereby qualified to 'learn from his/her experiences' (Bion, 1962), at the conclusion of which the analysand *becomes* his/her transformed experiences, much as he/she physically becomes the ultimate digestion and metabolism of the food he/she eats.

The intermediary transformations of Absolute Truth into tolerable truth

In suffering his/her seemingly allotted emotional experiences, the infant/analysand undergoes a series of ontological/epistemological transformations, not unlike that of the Krebs cycle for the intermediate metabolism of carbohydrates, as the intermediate metabolism of emotional thought from non-mental beta-elements (sense impression of emotional experience) (Bion, 1962, p. 5) to produce mentalizable alpha-elements (p. 6), which are assigned to memory, dream thoughts, and reinforcement of the contact-barrier (p. 17), the last of which guarantees the separation of consciousness from the unconscious. Bion consider alpha-function to be a heuristic model for a hypothetical transformative agency, which supplies alpha-elements for dreams, but at other times he seems to conflate alpha-function with dreaming (p. 17). The infant, initially lacking alpha-function, must totally depend on its mother to use her alpha-function to transform the infant's overwhelming emotions. The analysand similarly needs the analyst to complete the unfinished developmental task of transforming his/her hitherto incompletely transformed (contained) emotions, which latterly have become symptoms, so that they can at last become felt as feelings.

It is my impression upon reading Bion that this epistemological-ontological-phenomenological cycle takes place as follows: the infantile portion of the personality experiences *O*, Absolute Truth, as beta-elements, projects them into the analyst who, in containing them, transforms them from *O* to *K* (from Truth to Knowledge) and shares this knowledge with the analysand who, upon this acceptance of the *knowable truth*, allows it to become transformed into wisdom, personal *O*. I term this last act the achievement of the transcendent position (Grotstein, 1993).

Thus, we see a cycle from *O*-alpha-function-dreams-memory-contact-barrier-knowledge-wisdom-back to *O* (impersonal *O*, personal *O*), but as a forward-moving

helix of evolution and growth. Perhaps we should say ‘ $O \rightarrow O'$ ’), that is, from O to O prime because the subject's experience of *being O* has undergone a transformation.

In regard to truth, Bion states,

The patient can be seen to make a decision between the lie and the truth. The frequency with which this decision is automatically made in favour of the statement known to be untrue will determine the nature of the case. I focus attention on the position that now arises for the analyst ... By definition and by the tradition of all scientific discipline, the psychoanalytic movement is committed to the truth as the central aim (1970, p. 99).

Heisenberg has clearly stated his Uncertainty Principle, but in his search for the truth he discovered not only the Uncertainty Principle but the possibility that there was such a thing as uncertainty ... [I]n the course of this journey which the human race makes in its attempt to reach the truth we discover that we observers disturb the thing we are observing (1980, p. 98).

Hypothesis 1: No cure can be permanent or have the qualities essential for permanence unless it is based on what reason and common sense alike tell both analyst and analysand is the truth about the personality and mental mechanisms of the analysand, and so make it possible to attempt a scientific view or truthful view of external reality—partly because a false view leads to mistakes potentially fatal, but also because a false view, e.g. psychotic, needs a great expenditure of effort and the construction of elaborate social apparatus.

Hypothesis 2: The truth about the personality and mental mechanisms of the analysand, as demonstrable by the analyst to the analysand, leads to a permanent cure—as that would be understood by analyst and analysand taking a common-sense view of the results of such a demonstration. From these premises it should be possible to deduce secondary hypotheses of such a kind that they lend themselves to verification empirically in the way that is familiar to all those who employ scientific methods, no matter what discipline they pursue (1992, pp. 117-8).

Speculative hypotheses about alpha-function, dreaming, thinking and truth

My first speculative hypothesis, following my reading of Bion (1962, 1963, 1965, 1970, 1973, 1980, 1992), is that alpha-function (1962, pp. 16, 17, 21), along with dreaming/phantasying (p. 17), mediates and transforms one's emotional experiences emerging from O 's intersection with and impact upon one, and therefore constitutes ‘unconscious thinking’, ultimately helping the subject to achieve a personal, subjective ownership of his/her experience of the object—to rescue meaning, namely, truth, from ‘the deep and formless infinite’, O , and thereby *establish a sense of personal truth*, which occurs, in part, through the establishment and maintenance of the contact-barrier, which guarantees the functioning of a selectively permeable membrane between the unconscious and consciousness, and thereby becomes, in my opinion, the guarantor of emotional truth.

Put another way, using the infant as a model, the infant may experience indifferent impersonal O 's impact as, at first, intolerable beta-elements, which it projects into its mother who, in a state of reverie, uses her alpha-function to contain, mediate and translate them into personal truths (meanings) for the infant. This, according to

Bion, is the origin of thinking. When the infant introjects the model of its mother's alpha-function for itself, it can now project its beta-elements into its own alpha-function, and now thinks for itself.

Bion states,

In conformity with this my statement that the man has to 'dream' a current emotional experience whether it occurs in sleep or in waking life is reformulated thus: The man's alpha-function whether in sleeping or waking transforms the sense-impressions related to an emotional experience into alpha-elements, which cohere as they proliferate to form the contact-barrier (1962, p. 17).

Since it is essential that the creative worker [analyst] should keep his alpha-function unimpaired, it is clear that the analyst must be able to dream the session (1992, p. 120).

I believe the analyst may have to cultivate a capacity for dreaming while awake, and that this capacity must somehow be reconcilable with what we ordinarily conceive of as an ability for logical thought of the mathematical kind (p. 215).

One sees here how Bion seems to equate alpha-function with dreaming, but his views are clear that the subject must *dream* the absolute truth about ultimate reality into digestible personal truth.

My second speculative hypothesis is that there exists a *truth principle* and a derivative *truth drive*, both of which are associated with the reality principle as well as with what Bion seems to believe is its dialectically co-operative partner, the pleasure principle (1962, p. 4).

My third speculative hypothesis is that psychopathology predicates defective or inadequate containment of emotional experiences, namely, defects in containment, alpha-function and dreaming/phantasying, which are equivalent to defective affect-processing of *O*—which means repression of the truth drive. Thus, validated psychoanalytic interpretations do not so much discredit the fiction inherent to phantasies-dreams as repair their defective functioning of achieving harmonious parallel functioning of Systems *Ucs.* with *Cs.*

The 'truth drive' and its components

I speculate that there may exist a hitherto undiscovered common drive, which serves both epistemological and truth functions, and that, prior to Bion, only the former had been detected by Freud (1905, p. 200, 1913, p. 324) and by Klein (1928, p. 204). Following Bion, I distinguish between reality (*K*) and truth (*O*). From that time until the present, the concept of the reality principle was thought to exist only in a state of conflict with the pleasure principle, but the idea of a principle that addressed the need for truth, particularly emotional truth, had not yet been conceived. I believe that this inner-directed counterpart to the epistemophilic component drive constitutes a *truth drive* (or component drive) in its own right. I postulate that a truth drive is necessitated by adaptive and survival needs, and is associated with: a) 'unconscious consciousness' (attention, intuition), the 'seventh servant', the sense organ that is receptive to *internal* qualities, namely, psychic reality, which I believe is the locale of emotional truth; b) *alpha-function*

(Bion, 1962, p. 6) and ‘dreaming/phantasying’ (Grotstein, 2002, p. 113), Bion's hypothetical model for functions that transform the raw sense impressions of emotional experience (beta-elements) into mentalizable alpha-elements (1962, pp. 25, 26, 46) that can be remembered, dreamed, emotionally felt and thought about; c) the *container* (p. 98), which not only contains (processes, transforms) the truth but also *generates* it, namely, when mother, in reverie, generates hypotheses about her infant from within the repertoire of her own unique experiences, much as does the analyst with the analysand. Furthermore, the container can be likened to a prism, which diffracts the blinding illumination of *O* into spectra of disseminated meanings.

Inclusive within its conceptual embrace, however, may also be: d) *O*. Bion speaks of ‘thoughts in search of a thinker’ *seeking* a thinker to think them (1980, p. 18). These ‘thoughts’ are associated with relentlessly evolving *O* in its trajectory to intersect the emotional frontier or ‘protective shield’ (Freud, 1920, p. 30) or ‘contact-barrier’ (Bion, 1962, p. 19). It is this evolving force of *O* and its as yet unthought thoughts, ‘thoughts without a thinker’ (Bion, 1970, p. 104), that reminds me of the force of an instinctual drive—particularly if we consider that the infant's/analysand's experience of *O* is always that of an evolving state, which is summoned by the stimuli emerging from experience which often *seems* to originate from the outside (‘sensory impressions’ of emotional experience). I believe that Bion may have derived this trajectory of evolving *O* from Freud's concept of trauma:

The excitations coming from within are, however, in their intensity and in other qualitative respects—in their amplitude, perhaps—more commensurate with the system's method of working than the stimuli which stream in from the external world. This state of things produces two definite results. First, the feelings of pleasure and unpleasure (which are an index to what is happening in the interior of the apparatus) predominate over all external stimuli. And secondly, a particular way is adopted of dealing with any internal excitations which produce too great an increase of unpleasure: *there is a tendency to treat them as though they were acting not from the inside, but from the outside*, so that it may be possible to bring the shield against stimuli into operation as a means of defence against them (Freud, 1920, p. 29, my italics).

Thus, *O* evolves from within the unrepressed unconscious as noumena and inherent preconceptions but *seems* to emerge from external (or even internal) stimuli. It may be that either summons the appearance of the other and that they undetectably conflate into a combined experience.

On one hand, realistically, *O* (Absolute Truth) has no personal mission toward the individual. It is indifferent. On the other hand, however, I believe that there exists a universal unconscious phantasy that the circumstances which seem to come toward one or from within or without seem to portend that they have a fateful rendezvous with oneself, a sense of déjà vu, a superstition that only wanes in the depressive position with sufficient reality-testing. The more realistic source of the truth drive, however, as I see it, lies in the unconscious sense organ of consciousness, and its alliance with the inner-directed epistemophilic drive and the container. Money-Kyrle, an anthropologist as well as a psychoanalyst, also seems to support the idea of a truth drive:

Such misconceptions of the primal scene used to be attributed to the external impediments put in the way of the child's sexual curiosity. But I am now convinced that, like other animals, he is *innately predisposed to discover the truth* (1968, p. 417, my italics).³

Toward the conception of an emotional truth drive

Freud posited the libidinal or sexual drive in 1905 (p. 135) and the death drive in 1920. The latter has survived in classical analytic thinking as the aggressive drive, except among the Kleinians, who still adhere to the death drive. The former has remained intact, although Freud seemed to have preferred the 'life and death instincts'. He also referred in passing to another instinct, in this case, a component instinct:

At about the same time as the sexual life of children reaches its first peak, between the ages of 3 and 5, they also begin to show signs of the activity which may be ascribed to the instinct for knowledge and research. This instinct cannot be counted among the elementary instinctual components, nor can it be classed as exclusively belonging to sexuality. Its activity corresponds to a sublimated manner of obtaining mastery, while on the other hand it makes use of the energy of scopophilia (1905, p. 194).

Freud later stated,

[W]e often gain an impression that the instinct for knowledge can actually take the place of sadism in the mechanism of the obsessional neurosis. Indeed it is at bottom the offshoot of the instinct of mastery exalted into something intellectual (1913, p. 324, my italics).

It is my impression that, when Freud says 'mastery', we may think of adaptation (Hartmann, 1939), survival and truth. I suggest that the emotional truth drive is intimately associated with the epistemophilic component drive, and I should like, therefore, to nominate it, especially the latter inner-directed portion, as also being a truth drive—in conformity with Bion's 'L' (love), 'H' (hate) and 'K' (knowledge) linkages (1962, p. 42) (which I will discuss below). We *know* the emotional truth about (our relationship to) an object by how we feel about it in respect to our emotions of *love* and *hate*.

Bion examined Freud's theory of consciousness and the heightened attention that needs to develop toward external stimuli. He concludes,

I treat sense impressions, pleasure and pain as alike real, thereby discarding the distinction that Freud makes between the 'outer-world' and pleasure and pain, as irrelevant to the theme of comprehension. I shall however discuss the bearing of the Pleasure principle and the Reality principle on the choice that a patient can be seen to make between modifying frustration and evading it (1962, p. 4).

I gather the following from Bion's statement: a) he operationally unites the pleasure and reality principles as collaboratively oppositional, not conflicting, and conceives that they, along with consciousness and the unconscious, constitute binary, dialectical oppositional structures; b) consciousness is a sense organ for the perception of the

³ I am indebted to Lia Pistener de Cortiñas for this reference (personal communication, 1 February 2004).

internal as well as the external world. Having stated that, then the functions of attention (*meeting the stimulus halfway*) and notation (memory) (Freud, 1911, p. 220) are some of its functions; c) the distinction that Bion hypothesizes between the patient who evades frustration and the one who modifies it can be restated as the distinction between the patient who seeks the truth and the one who evades the truth (who instinctively knows that he/she cannot tolerate the truth).

The necessity for truth

The analyst, like the mother in reverie with her infant, has the task of helping the analysand realize and accept the ongoing truths of his/her emotional life. These truths include all the impacting elements of raw circumstance, including emotions and the surging drives. When we stop to think about it, the procedure of psychoanalysis has as one of its major aims the elucidation of the analysand's emotional truths. That is the goal of every interpretation. Bion's impression that the infant projects its fear of dying into its mother could just as well be restated that it projects its ontological terror into her as a consequence of its relentlessly surging vitality (*entelechy*), its surging 'truth' about the pain of being alive, which may be felt to evolve more forcefully than the infant can momentarily encompass—all in the face of being constantly confronted on the outside with centripetally directed objects and opportunity stimuli to which it must be ever ready to accommodate and assimilate—and on the inside with evolving *O*.

What the analyst actually does, I have come to believe, is to avail him/herself of the analysand's emotional truth drive, the generator of personal meaning. Put another way, it is one of the major tasks of analysis for the analyst to put his/her analysand in touch with his/her inner emotional truths and to have him/her accept them by being able to *feel* them (Damasio, 2003, pp. 4-7) and thereby be able to be truthful with oneself so as to achieve authentic meaning. I also hold that the truth drive constitutes the force behind the analysand's remaining in analysis in the face of frustration and emotional pain. The reward is truth. The truth is real and can somehow be dealt with—because it is sought.

'The seventh servant'

Thus, I conjecture that unconscious consciousness (attention, intuition) and the truth drive constitute the 'seventh servant', which subserves the quest for and perception of emotional truth that must first undergo a transformation from the Absolute Truth about Ultimate Reality (intolerable truth, indifferent reality) to tolerable truth through the mediation of alpha-function. The latter, in turn, is associated with dreaming/phantasying (both are components of containment) and binocularly employs both the reality principle *and* the pleasure principle in the service of the truth drive's ongoing assays and mediations of evolving *O*. In other words, the pleasure and reality principles together triangulate *O* so as to achieve acceptable truth assays—abstractions (Bion, 1962, p. 19)—from it.

Thus, normally the pleasure principle could be seen as functioning in co-operative, dialectical (binary) opposition to the reality principle under the hegemony

of an emotional truth principle. The idea that the pleasure principle and the reality principle are dialectically oppositional but not necessarily conflictual emerges from Bion's dialectical concept of 'binocularity' (1962, p. 54) stated above. One consequence of these ideas is that the internal world can also be considered to be 'psychically realistic' in its own unique way, and that the pleasure principle can be looked upon as a necessary oppositional collaborator, one which 'pleasures' (disguises but does not normally subvert) Truth so that it may become a humanly tolerable truth within the domains of the unconscious and consciousness as they binocularly triangulate *O*, the Absolute Truth about Ultimate Reality.

Containment facilitates the transformation and mentalization (mental digestion) of the Absolute Truth about Ultimate (indifferent) Reality into tolerable, personally meaningful, subjective truths by employing alpha-function, dreaming/phantasying and symbolization to modify and encode truth's verdicts into alpha-elements so as to permit mental transcriptions for subsequent operations, for example, dream thoughts, memory, accumulation as a contact-barrier between the unconscious and consciousness, feelings, thoughts and preparations to become symbols (constant conjunctions). In so doing, *finite man (K) becomes integrated with his/her infinite counterpart (O)*, and 'thoughts without a thinker', noumena, inherent preconceptions, Ideal Forms, 'godhead', our ongoing 'unborns', find their realization through the agency of the truth drive.

'Alpha-function' functions paradoxically to allow the entry of emotional truth by effectively encoding and disguising it (pleasure principle)—initially as dreams and phantasies. The sense organs, conscious and unconscious consciousness, and the container with its alpha-function, must have an awareness of their own Hooke's Law (stress is equal to the strain on an object times the modulus of its elasticity), its modulus of elasticity (resilience) to assess how much truth it can bear. If it assesses that its container capacity (alpha-function, dreaming/phantasying, contact-barrier) is less than adequate, then impinging raw truth, *O*, will be denied entry and become rerouted as beta-elements by evacuative projective identification into the soma and/or into internal or external objects. Internal objects may become 'radioactive waste dumps' for unprocessed or incompletely processed beta-elements and may characterize psychotic, traumatic, bizarre and/or chaos objects, and severe superego objects.

The relationship between truth, reality, honesty and faith

It is curious that, although 'reality'—both internal and external—has been extensively written about by psychoanalysts, little mention has been made by them of 'truth'⁴ or, for that matter, 'honesty'. I believe that it is important to heed the hint that Bion bequeathed us when he clearly distinguished between 'Absolute Truth' and 'Ultimate Reality'. It is my impression that *reality*, as we generally think of it, is experienced as an ongoing cross-modal sensory constant and is testable via 'common sense' (Bion, 1962, p. 50), that is, by more than one sense organ or by more than

⁴ It was only after this manuscript had become accepted for publication that I became aware of Rezende's (2004) notable contribution, 'The experience of truth in clinical psychoanalysis'.

one person. *Truth*, on the other hand, constitutes our emotional comprehension and acceptance of reality, both inner and outer. Further, I suggest that *honesty* designates our ethical respect for truth in regard to reality. Put another way, reality always *is*. Truth constitutes our personal, emotional, subjective acceptance of it as *our* truth and *the* truth. Honesty, I believe, is the quality of our character that respects and mediates our regard for truth about reality. Faith, as Bion views it, may be synopsized as follows:

It may be wondered what state of mind is welcome if desires and memories are not. A term that would express approximately what I need to express is 'faith'—faith that there is an ultimate reality and truth—the unknown, unknowable, 'formless infinite'. This must be believed of every object of which the personality can be aware: the evolution of ultimate reality (signified by O) has issued in objects of which the individual can be aware (1970, p. 31).

Winnicott's (1960) concept of the 'true-self', as contrasted with its counterpart, the 'false-self', speaks of the importance he attributed to truth in the personality. Furthermore, I believe that respect for the truth about reality subserves the principle of adaptation (Hartmann, 1939).

Personal truth and the sense of being real

I hypothesize that the truth drive functions as an unending search for one's *own personal, emotional truth* in the maw of raw experience, *O*, and one's response to the *O* (truth) of one's objects. It is the source and calibration of our ontological reliability. I believe that we experience our truth drive through our *sense of truth*, which is but another way of affirming our sense of being *real* and impelling us to search for the *real* in others. Ogden (2001) discusses the idea of personal truth from the standpoint of the analyst's own subjectivity. Emotions (body) and feelings (mental) constitute truth's envoys. Truth is the conjoined twin of *honesty*. The quest for truth originates, in part, as I have stated earlier, in 'unconscious consciousness', the 'sense organ for the perception of emotions' (Bion, 1962, p. 86), in conjunction, I conjecture, with the truth drive's origin in the unrepressed unconscious as an *a priori* Kantian primary category. I believe that the concept of a truth drive, an inherent pulsion toward truth, helps us understand why most analysands are ultimately able to accept the truth of the analyst's interpretations, which may fly in the face of their defenses. This is especially true when we try to introduce the analysand to the *truth of their emotional needs*. The need for truth is basic.

Ghazanfar and Logothetis (2003), experimenting with monkeys, studied the correlation between auditory and visual clues as a measure of their (the monkeys') sense of truth obtained by gazing at the object's face while they heard the object's utterances. The authors suggest that this is one of the techniques whereby monkeys (and humans) determine intersubjective truth. One of the goals of psychoanalysis is the facilitation of the expression of this truth drive's quest for *personal* and *intersubjective* truth, namely, *realness*, as a tolerable derivative of the impersonal Absolute Truth about Ultimate Reality, *O*. We recall that one of the themes that runs through the Oedipus saga was Oedipus's fateful insistence on learning the truth about his origins.

Truth, thinking and falsehoods

The achievement of what I would call ‘wisdom’ as contrasted with knowledge lies in a transformation in *O*—beyond knowledge (Bion, 1965, p. 25), and knowledge is Truth's falsehood (1970, p. 100, 117) because of its having to have been altered through alpha-function and dreaming/phantasying distortion in order for it to be humanly tolerated. It seems to be a moot point in Bion's writings whether or not one must, in effect, detour through a transformation in *K* before transcending to *O* to achieve wisdom directly without this detour, as he suggests the mystics do (1970, p. 64).

Bion states,

All thinking and all thoughts are true when there is no thinker. In contrast to this, for lies and falsities a thinker is absolutely necessary. In any situation where a thinker is present the thoughts ... are expressions of falsities and lies. The only true thought is one that has never found an individual to ‘contain’ it ... It follows that all thought as it is ordinarily known, that is, as an attribute of the human being, is false (p. 117).

The falsification of thought results from alpha-function and dreaming/phantasying through the ‘co-operative’ function, Bion alleges, of the pleasure principle. Thus, the analyst, according to Bion (1992, p. 43), must first ‘dream’ the analysand and then abandon memory and desire so as to rid him/herself of the very knowledge he/she gained up until then through dreaming/phantasying, which produces images and symbols as the after-effect of direct contact with the object, *O*. Ultimately, I believe, the mission of alpha-function and dreaming/phantasying is, under the aegis of the truth drive, to render the cosmically impersonal Absolute Truth about the Ultimate Reality of our experiences with objects (internal and external) into tolerable, personal and emotionally meaningful truths and realizations about oneself and one's objects, by transforming our impressions of them into images, symbols or constructions that one can mentally manipulate and feel (transformation from *O* to *K*) so as, ultimately, to achieve wisdom and serenity.

***O* as first cause and origin of ‘thoughts without a thinker’**

O represents the summation of the energy mass of infinite information (emotional and otherwise) that is always evolving. Correspondingly, we unconsciously experience a destiny to seek it, prompted by our truth drive to keep this rendezvous, or to avoid it out of anxious premonition. Bion states,

Psychoanalytical events cannot be stated directly ... any more than can those of other scientific research. I shall use the sign *O* to denote that which is the ultimate reality, absolute truth, godhead, the infinite, the thing-in-itself. *O* does not fall in the domain of knowledge or learning save incidentally; it can be ‘become’, but it cannot be ‘known’. It is darkness and formlessness but it enters the domain *K* when it has evolved to a point where it can be known, through knowledge gained by experience, and formulated in terms derived from sensuous experience; its existence is conjectured phenomenologically (1970, p. 26).

He states further,

The analyst must focus his attention on *O*, the unknown and unknowable ... He cannot identify with it. He must be it ... It stands for the absolute truth in and of any object; it is

assumed that this cannot be known by any human being; it can be known about, its presence can be recognized and felt, but cannot be known. It is possible to be at one with it ... No psychoanalytic discovery is possible without recognition of its existence, at-one-ment with it and evolution. The religious mystics have probably approximated most closely to expression of experience of it ... Its existence is as essential to science as to religion (p. 27).

In positing *O*, Bion replaced positivistic, deterministic certainty with infinite, ever-evolving, ever-transient, all too chaotically meaningful mystery and uncertainty. He states, 'The thought and the thinker exist independently of each other' (p. 117). *O* is Bion's (1965, p. 17) term for an ineffable and inscrutable domain that lies beyond imagistic and symbolic reality, beyond the pleasure and reality principles *and* the death instinct, one that he designates as Absolute Truth, Ultimate Reality, noumena, things-in-themselves, Ideal Forms, infinity and godhead, to which I would add *entelechy* (Aristotle's vitalistic concept that designates the actualization or evolution of the entirety of one's inherent potential and vitality). *O* cannot be conceived of, imagined, signified or symbolized (V. Schermer, 2003). It just *is*. *O* closely corresponds to Lacan's (1966) 'Register of the Real' and Heidegger's (1927) 'Dasein' and 'aletheia' (unconcealment). One sees parallels with it in Borges's (1998) stories of the infinite 'Aleph' and the 'Library of Babel'.

Bion seems to believe that *O* is first cause within the psyche. It is a cosmic, ontological reality that is for ever evolving and intersecting the emotional frontier of the individual as he/she contacts objects (internal or external). This intersection occurs in intimate human relationships as 'catastrophic change' (Bion, 1965, p. 8) and 'psychological turbulence' (p. 158) in which the subject and object each experience *O* (Bion, 1965, p. 68, 1970, p. 118; Eigen, 1998, p. 77) or 'emotional storms' (Bion, 1970, p. 11). The infant's and his object's inability to tolerate *O* eventuates in 'nameless dread' (Bion, 1992, p. 45-6; Eigen, 1998, pp. 81-94).

O, the unknown and unknowable

Bion's concept of *O*, as I have mentioned earlier, designates a third reality, one that differs from external and internal reality as we have known them but which has intimate contact with each. Freud had already hinted at it as follows:

There is often a passage in even the most thoroughly interpreted dream which has to be left obscure; this is because we become aware during the work of interpretation that at that point that there is a tangle of dream-thoughts which cannot become unraveled and which moreover adds nothing to our knowledge of the content of the dream. This is the dream's navel, the spot where it reaches into the *unknown* (1900, p. 525, my italics).

Later in the same work, Freud again alludes to what I interpret as the unknown, *O*:

The unconscious is the true psychological reality; *in its innermost nature it is as much unknown to us as the reality of the external world, and it is as incompletely presented by the data of consciousness as is the external world by the communications of our sense organs* (p. 613).

From these allusions, Freud himself appears to have been a mystic and seems to have anticipated Bion's *O*. I gather that he actually might have conceived of a domain that was extraterritorial to the external world of our consciousness, an

‘external unconscious’, so to speak (Bion, 1963). This idea complicates the issue, if I am correct, by implying that *O* is both located within the unconscious as Plato's archetypal inherent preconceptions and Kant's noumena and primary categories (p. 12), namely, as Freud's (1915) unrepressed unconscious—and located *beyond* the unconscious and consciousness—when he suggests that the analyst must employ ‘binocular vision’, namely, use his conscious as well as unconscious mind to become receptive to *O* (Bion, 1970, p. 88). Yet that conundrum may have already been answered earlier when I stated that the analyst looks within him/herself to the meaning of *O*, no matter what its supposed origin.

Another possibility presents itself, however. May we not consider that the unconscious is holographic in so far as it can be considered to be holistic and ubiquitous, on one hand, and implicate (divided) (Bohm, 1980), on the other? I am postulating the possibility, to accommodate Bion's theories, that *O* can be considered to be paradoxically both beyond and within the embrace of the unconscious and consciousness—or both inside and outside the self, as both of Freud's citations above seem to prefigure and as Lacan (1966) seems to propound. Freud states, ‘it [the unconscious] is as much unknown to us as the reality of the external world, and it is as incompletely presented by the data of consciousness as is the external world’ (1900, p. 613). I assume, particularly in the case of consciousness, that he is implying that the sense organs receptive to external stimuli grasp the object-stimuli *as phenomena* but not their template, Kant's *noumena*. However, Bion replaced the concept of consciousness and unconsciousness with that of infinity and finiteness (1992, p. 370).

In addition, *O*, when accepted, becomes *abstracted* (Bion, 1962, p. 69) from the generality of its infinity and total symmetry to finite particularities. Further, *definitory hypotheses* are formed as *constant conjunctions* (binding of the experience with a name). But Bion states,

Any definitory hypothesis, be it exclamation, name, theoretical system, or extended statement such as a book, has, and has always been recognized to have, a negative function. It must always imply that something is; equally it implies that something is not. It is therefore open to the recipient to infer one or other according to his temper. If the personality is incapable of tolerating frustration there seems to be no reason why he should not develop on the assumption that the definitory hypothesis means that something is (1970, p. 16).

I take this to mean that the definitory hypothesis selectively abstracts *O* to obtain hints about its nature but it also, when frustration can be tolerated, *defines what it is not*.

O is indifferent and neutral. It just *is* and continuously, relentlessly, inexorably evolves—probably also, I believe, because ongoing experiences are constantly evoking its activity. The unconscious sense organ of consciousness that is responsive to the internal world, which can be associated with the ineffable subject of the unconscious (Grotstein, 2000, p. 11), would seem to process beta-element impressions caused by *O*'s inexorable intersections of one's emotional frontier. The unconscious sense organ of consciousness immediately attributes (projects and encodes), I believe, subjective personalness to the newly arrived beta-elements; that is, it attributes purpose (intentionality, agency) and omnipotence to the developing

beta-elements, as in ideas of reference (solipsism). The beta-elements are felt by the infant to be *O*'s henchman whose sole purpose is to harm, haunt, shame, threaten or intimidate him/her until they become processed.

'L' 'H' and 'K' object linkages

Bion transforms Freud's (1905, 1920) drives into 'L' 'H' and 'K' (love, hate and knowledge) emotional linkages with objects and as 'co-enzymes', if you will, of the transformative processing of *O*. It is my impression that Bion believes that the content of the repressed is *O*, to which I should add the truth drive, and thereby marginalizes the status of the other instinctual drives. These linkages constitute emotional valences that qualify, categorize and encode the ever-impinging raw beta-elements to give them personal meaning.

Summary

I postulate the concept of a truth drive, which constitutes Bion's enigmatic 'seventh servant' and also constitutes a function of a truth principle. I theorize that this truth drive parallels the workings of the epistemophilic drive and originates in the unconscious sense organ of consciousness that is responsive to psychical qualities, and which meets evolving *O* (the Absolute Truth about Ultimate Reality) halfway. The major content of the repressed, in other words, is evolving *O* and the truth drive, which meets consciousness halfway within us. The truth drive subserves adaptation and survival needs, and calibrates our ontological reliability. The truth drive employs alpha-function and dreaming (by day and by night) in order to process, transform and encode raw indifferent truth into personal acceptable truth so that we are enabled to be honest with ourselves. The truth instinct and its ally alpha-function allow us to be reunited with selections from our inner repertoire of infinite potentialities—our 'unborns'—as realizations, as our finite self becomes integrated with our infinite self.

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